

GOWANUS CANAL REDEFINED

architectural competition



291 THIRD ST. BROOKLYN, NY 11215

104 FRANKLYN ST. NEW YORK, NY 10013

GOWANUS MEMORIAL ARTYARD

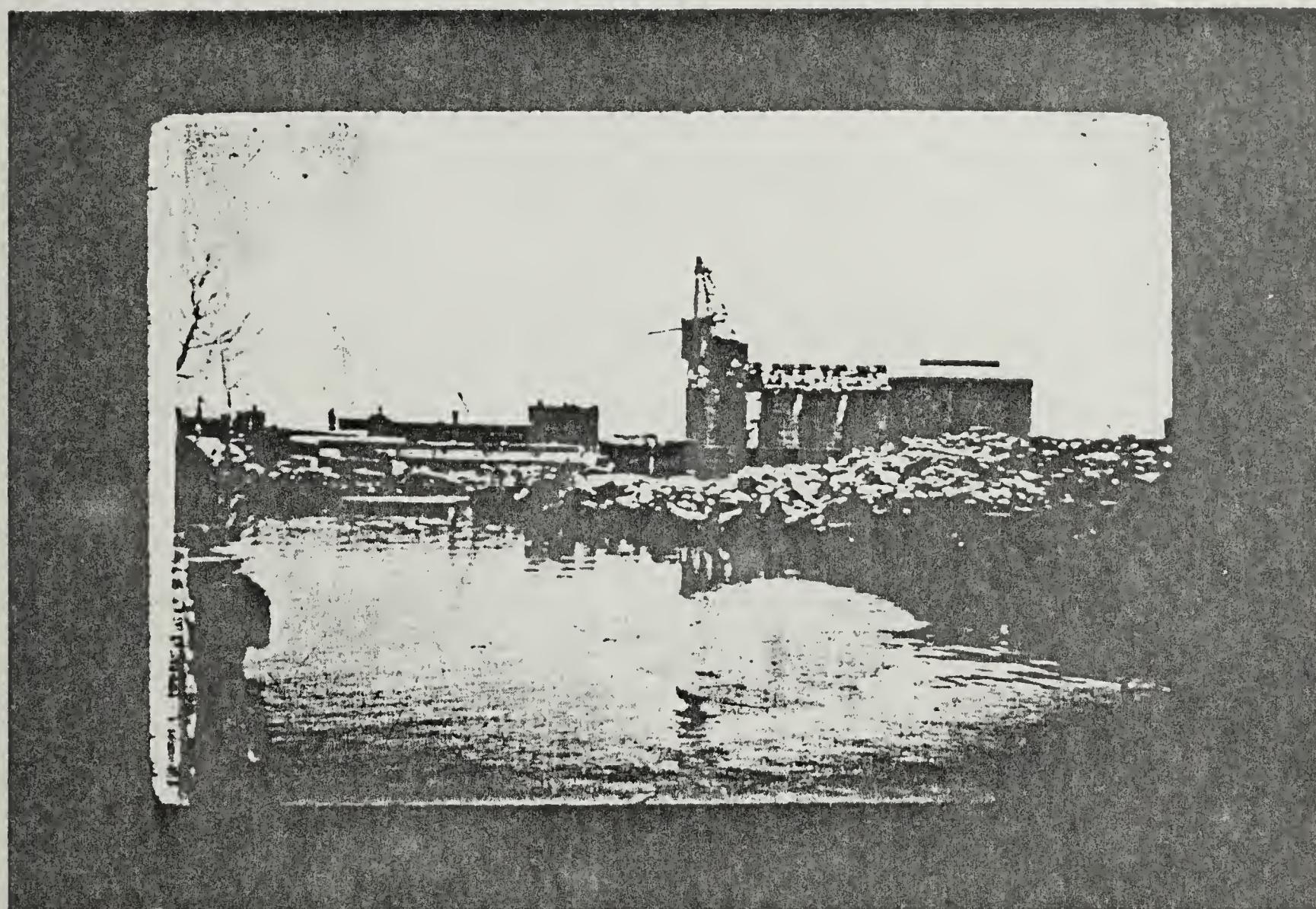
FRANK SHIFFREIN · DIRECTOR (212) 858-4783

SCOTT SIKEN · EXEC. CURATOR (212) 431-8783

GOWANUS CANAL REDEFINED

architectural competition

The Gowanus Memorial Artyard announces an architectural competition, THE GOWANUS CANAL REDEFINED. Its objective is to receive and exhibit proposals from artists and architects, that reexamine a once vital industrial complex surrounding the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn, New York. Selected entries are to be exhibited in conjunction with THE MONUMENT REDEFINED, an extensive exhibition of arts in all media that will explore the theme of redefining the monument. The combined exhibition will take place during September of 1982 in Brooklyn, New York. The most outstanding entry will be given \$1000 prize determined by a panel of jurors of constituting concerned community members. In addition, the Storefront for Art and Architecture, a recently established gallery in Manhattan, will select outstanding proposals to be showcased during late October of 1982.



For additional information:

Scott Siken 212-431-8783, 431-1247
Frank Shifreen 212-675-6199, 858-4783

This event is being sponsored by:

The Decentralization Program, made possible by Public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts. In Kings County, the Decentralization Program is administered by the Brooklyn Arts and Culture Association, Inc. (BACA)
The Gowanus Canal Community Development Corp.
Carroll Gardens Association
Organization of Independent Artists
Department of Parks and Recreation
Al Atara

Send a self addressed stamped envelope along with the Entry Form to receive a complete information for the competition
address to: THE GOWANUS CANAL REDEFINED
104 Franklin Street
New York, NY. 10013

Jury

James Albano Director of Paumanock, and Director of Gowanus Canal Community Development Corporation.

Mary Boone Gallery Owner and Dealer of Contemporary Art.

Joseph Bresnan Director of Fine Arts. Department of Parks and Recreation, New York City.

Henry Geldzahler Commissioner, Department of Cultural Affairs, New York City.

Annette Kuhn Assistant to the Mayor, Art commission of New York City.

Irving Sandler Art Critic and Art Historian.

Marcia Tucker Director of the New Museum.
Deadline for the final submission to the architectural competition has been extended to September 1, 1982

Entry Form

Entrant

Address

Phone

271 THRU ST. BROOKLYN, NY 11213

GOWANUS MEMORIAL ARTYARD

FRANK SHIFFREIN · DIRECTOR (212) 858-4783

104 FRANKLYN ST. NEW YORK, NY 10013

SCOTT SIKEN · EXEC. CURATOR (212) 431-8783

TO

please post

Monument Redefined is an extensive exhibition of content oriented artwork to be held in Brooklyn, New York, during September 1982. Established and emerging artists will address the issue of contemporary monument. Together they will translate their ideas through various media of sculpture, painting, graphic art, architecture, performance art, video and slide presentations. There will be three primary locations:

Performance Space:

The Downtown Cultural Center
111 Willoughby Street
(opens Sept. 10)

Outdoor Space:

Public Place. City owned space in
the Gowanus Canal area, 5th and Smith
(opens Sept. 17)

Indoor Space:

33 Flatbush Ave. Al Atara Bldg.
Approx. 10,000 sq. ft.
(opens Sept. 24)

Among the growing lists of artists submitting proposals for the exhibition are: Leon Golub, Dennis Oppenheim, Alice Aycock, Nancy Holt, Richard Hambleton, Christo, Nancy Spero, Laura Foreman, Rudolf Baranik and Komar/Melamid.

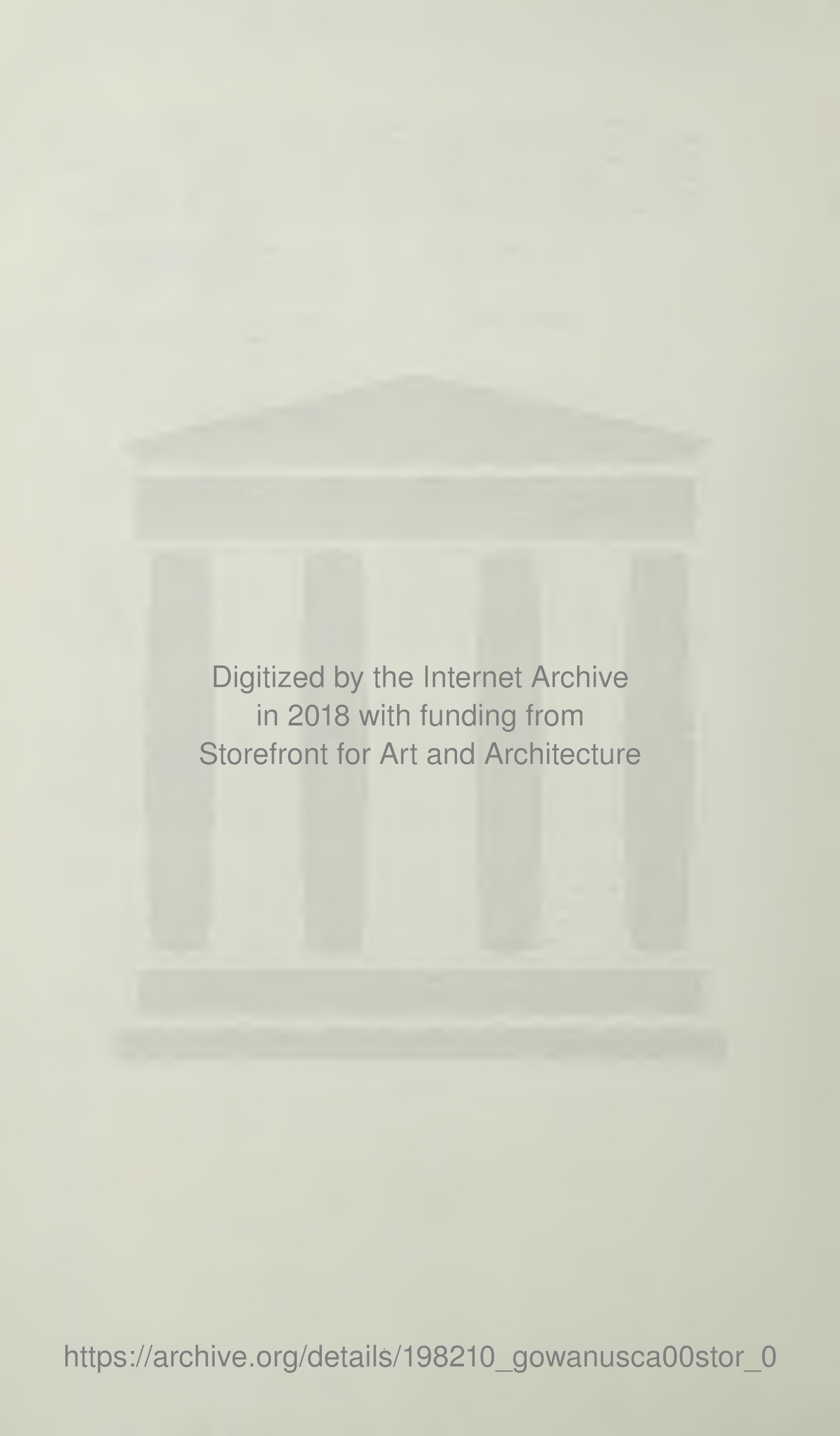
In conjunction with this exhibit, the Gowanus Memorial Artyard is presenting an architectural competition, Gowanus Canal Redefined. Its purpose is to receive and exhibit proposals that reexamine a once vital industrial complex surrounding the Gowanus Canal. A historical background is provided to perpetuate a dialogue between the historical context, and the existing context. A concrete vision of the future may be conceived from this dialogue.

Due to the vast size of the site and limited time, we perceive the proposals will be conceptual in both attitude and expression. Such conditions may promote synonymous and comparative conclusions from all professions. To promote diversity of proposals, restrictive requirements for the competition have been avoided. We are equally sympathetic to proposals of visionary statements as well as pragmatic solutions. Furthermore, the presentation methods and medium is to be chosen by entrants themselves to best reflect their content. This is a conscientious decision to support creative autonomy of individual proposals.

The deadline for the competition is September 1, 1982. All entries should be mailed or hand delivered to Gowanus Memorial Artyard, no later than September 1, 1982. They must be in a completed state in order to be exhibited. A number of entries to the competition will be exhibited in conjunction with the exhibition of Monument Redefined at the Indoor Space from September 24. In addition, Storefront for Art and Architecture will select and exhibit outstanding proposals to be showcased at their recently established gallery in Manhattan, during late October. Furthermore, the most outstanding proposal will be given a \$1,000 prize determined by a panel of jurors consisting of concerned community members.

Jury

James Albano.	:Director of Paumanock, and Director of Gowanus Canal Community Development Corporation.
Mary Boone.	:Gallery Owner and Dealer of Contemporary Art
Joseph Bresnan	:Director of Fine Arts, Department of Parks and Recreation, New York City.
Henry Geldzahler	:Commissioner, Department of Cultural Affairs, New York City.
Annette Kuhn.	:Assistant to the Mayor, Art commission on the City of New York
Irving Sandler.	:Art Critic and Art Historian
Marcia Tucker.	:Director of the New Museum.



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Supplementary informations can be found at the following places:

1. New York Historical Society
170 Central Park West New York City.
873-3400
2. Long Island Historical Society.
128 pierrepont Street Brooklyn, New York 11201
624-0890
3. New York City Dept. of City Planning
2 Lafayette New York City
566-3296
Up to date maps, aerial photographs dating 1972,
Zoning, Building Use, and other information.
4. Tri-State Regional Planning Comm.
1 World Trade Center New York City
938-3300
Large scale aerial photographs dating 1980.
5. Site-Gowanus Canal
The most informative source. Visits to the site
is highly recommended. Take the F train to
Smith & 9th Street.

All entries must be received at the Gowanus Memorial Artyard.

104 Franklin Street
New York, New York 10013

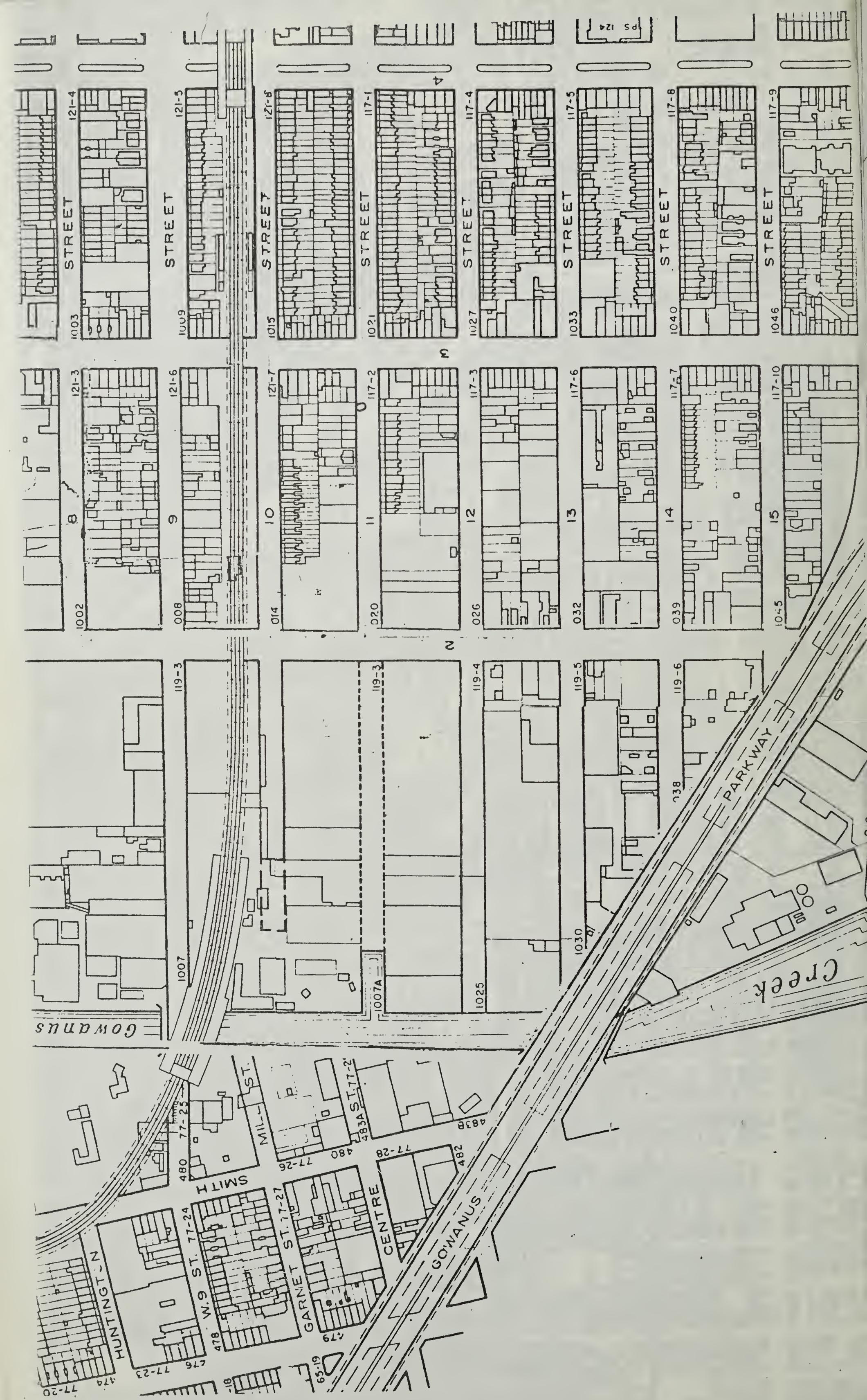
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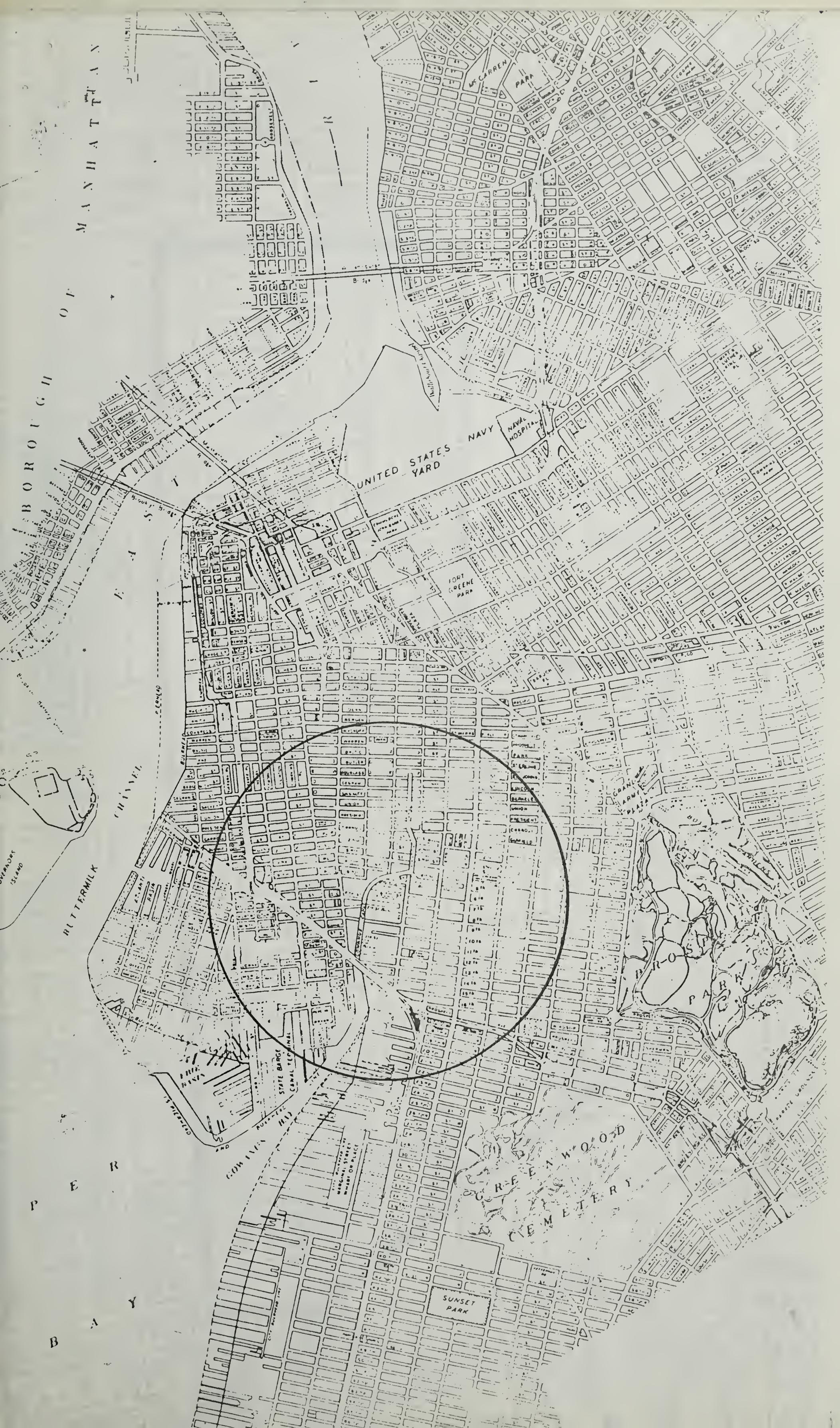
Scott Siken 212-431-8783 431-1247	Frank Shifreen 212-858-4783 675-6199
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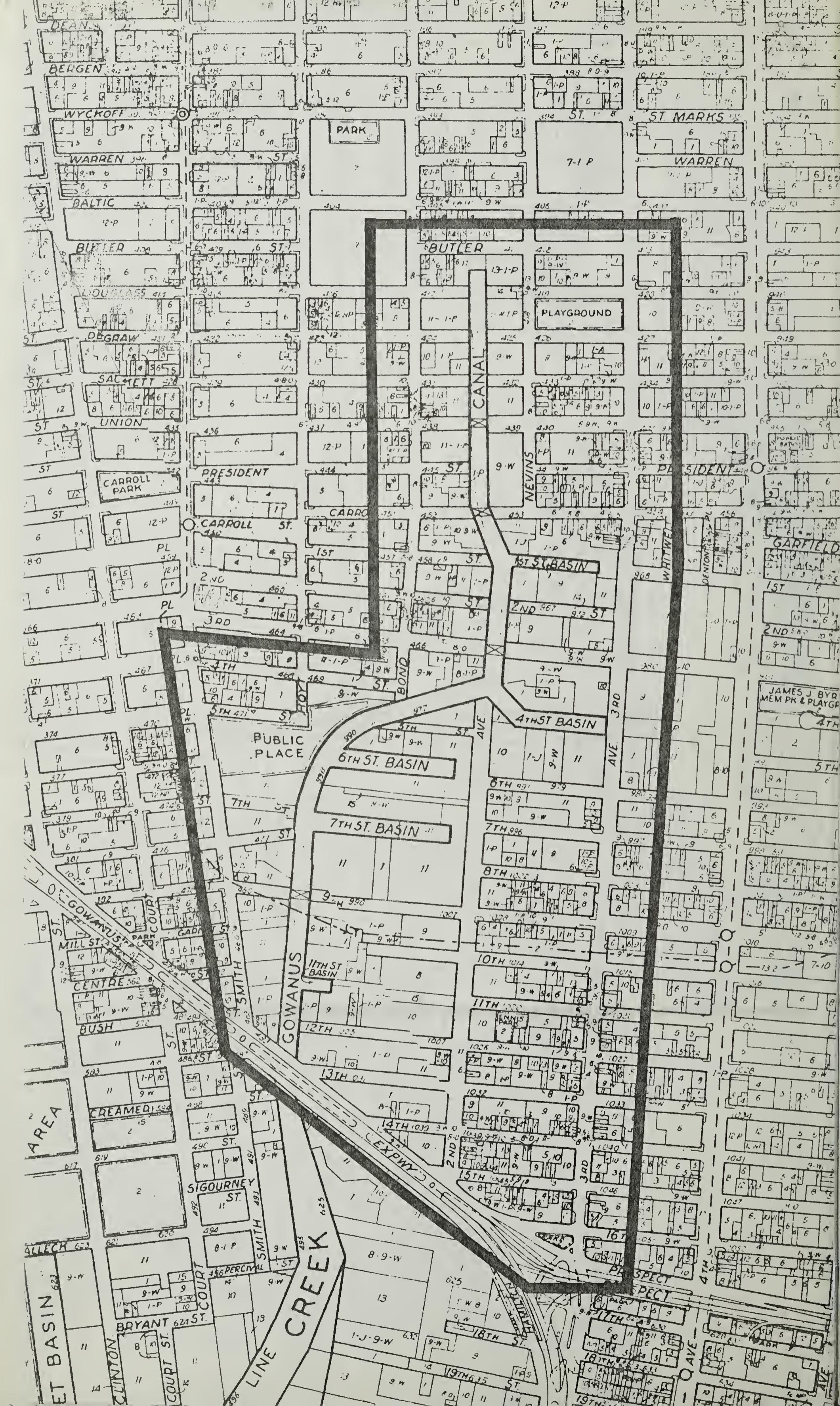
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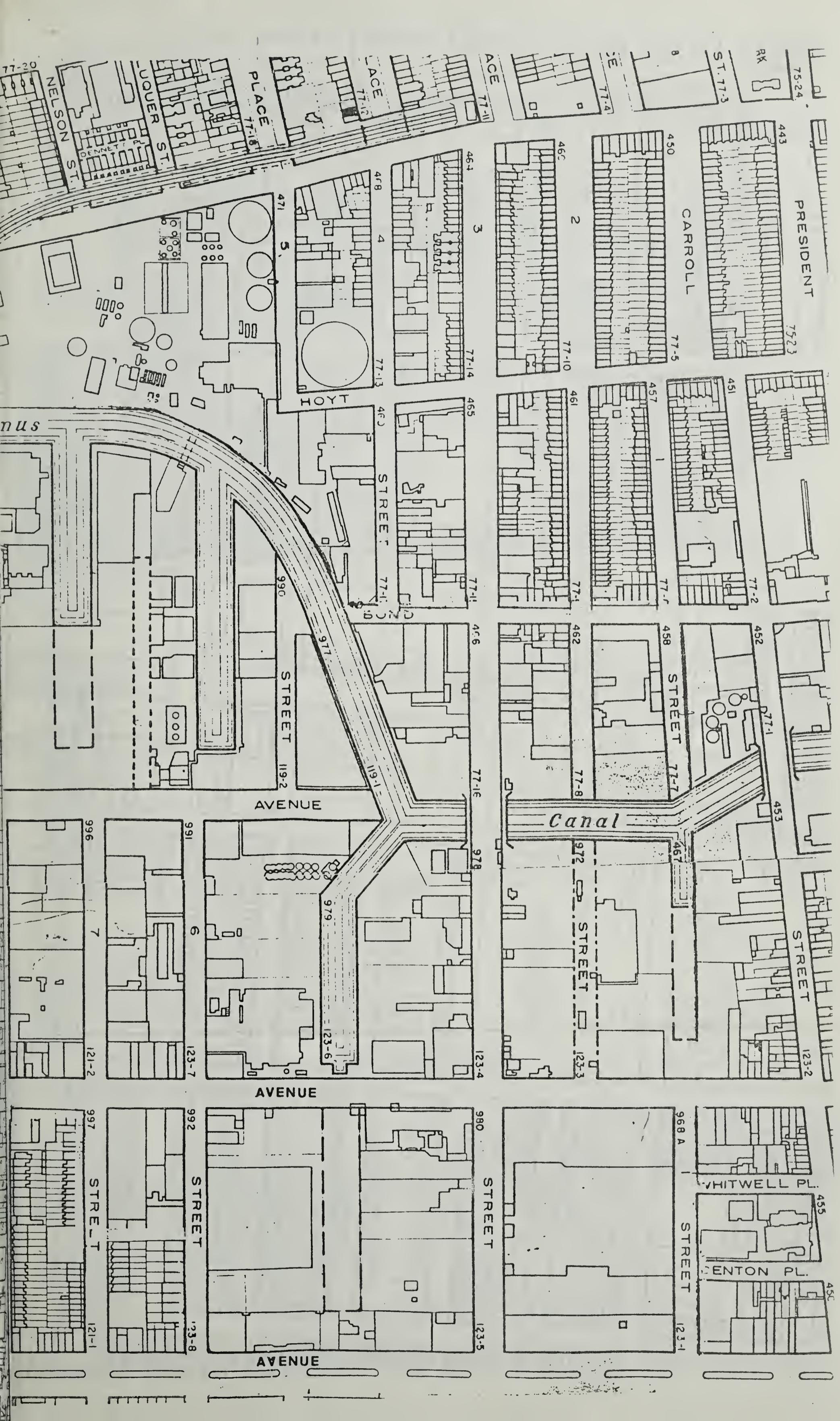
Kyong D. Park
Director of Storefront for Art and Architecture,
and assisted by
Jayne Pagnucco

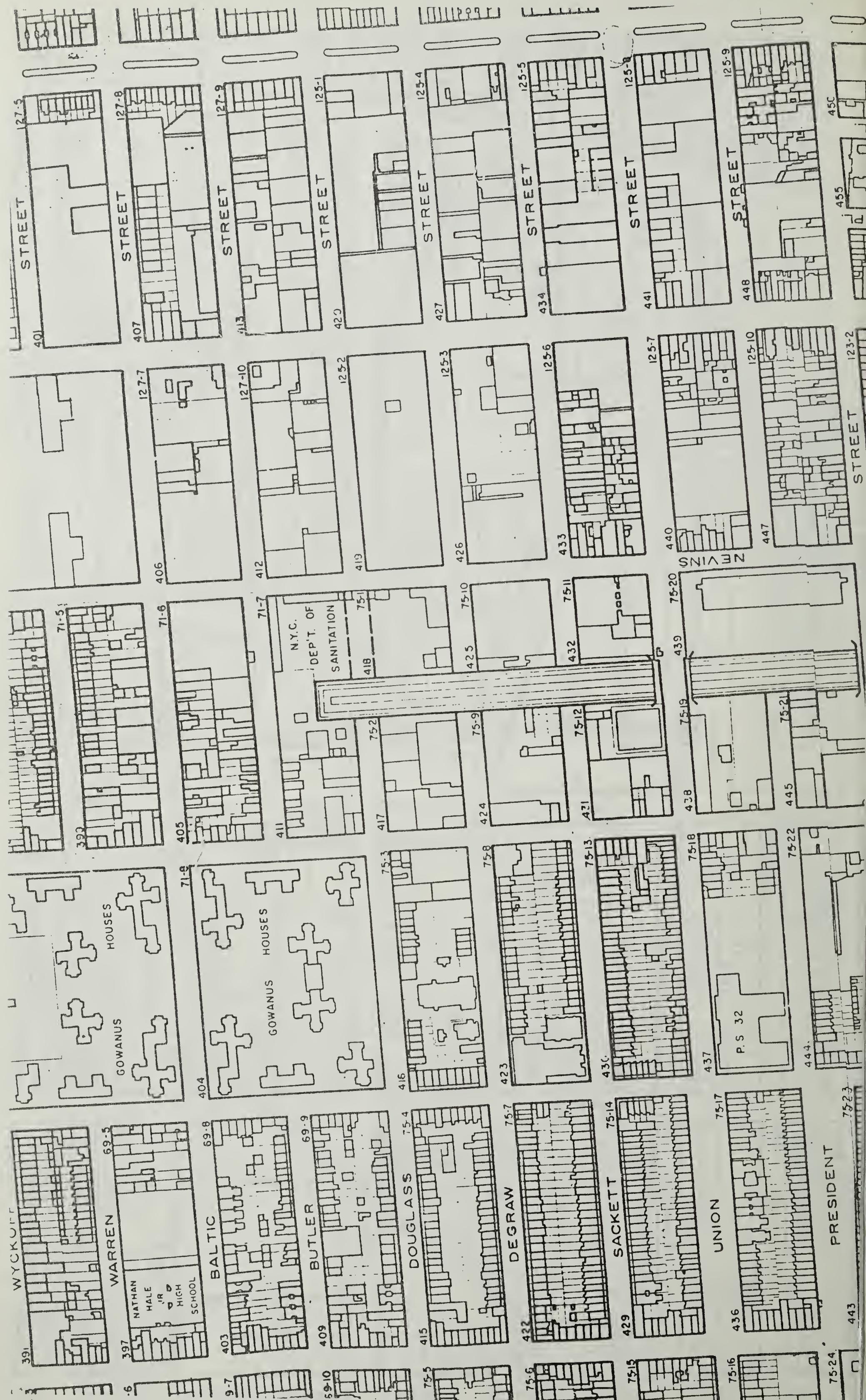


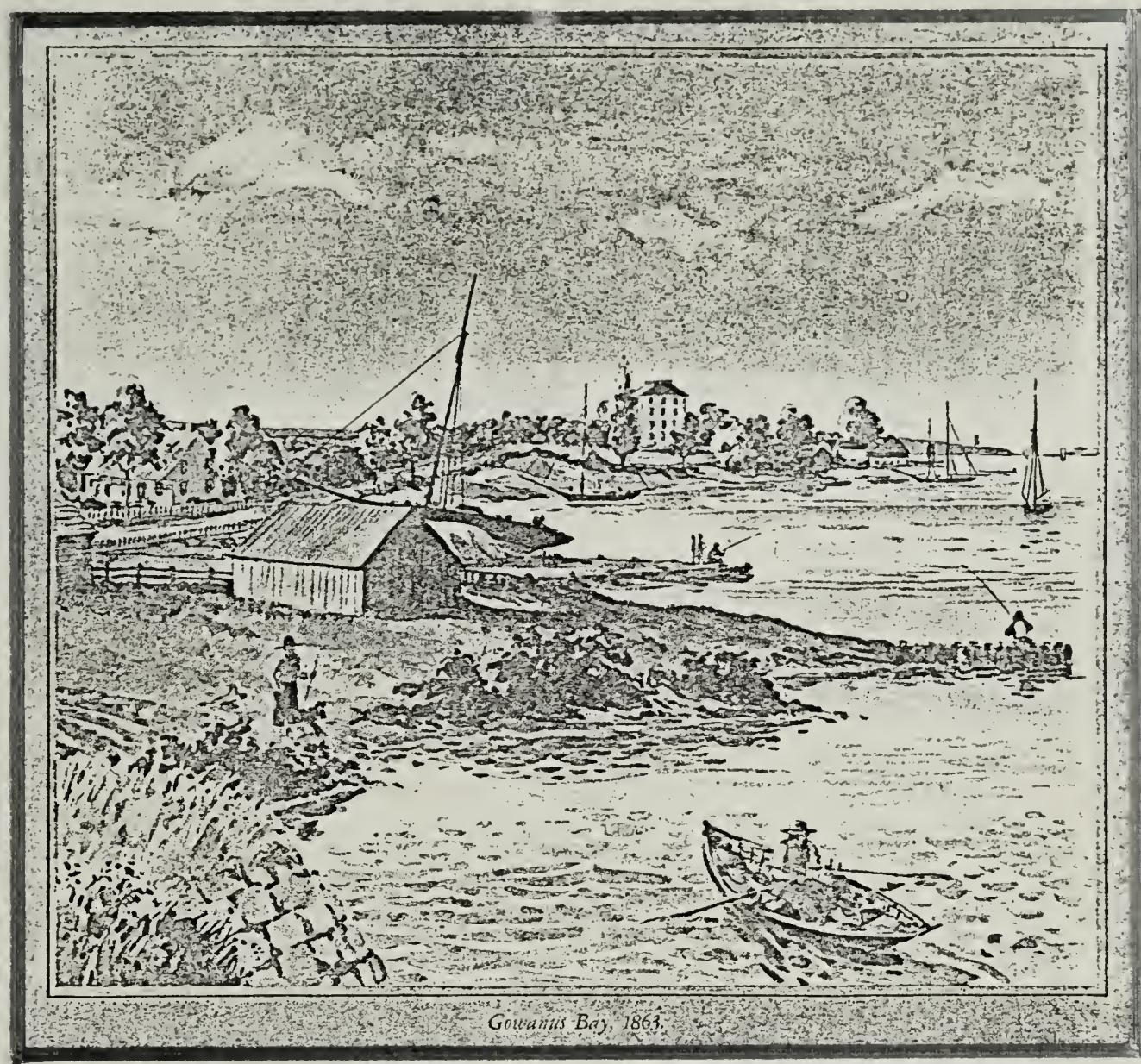












GOWANUS TRIBUTARY STUDY

SECTION I DESCRIPTION AND HISTORICAL SKETCH OF TRIBUTARY AREA

Gowanus extends from Wyckoff Street south to the Gowanus Expressway and from Smith Street east to Fourth Avenue. It blends almost imperceptibly into the neighboring residential communities of Carroll Gardens to the west, Boerum Hill to the north and lower Park Slope to the east. Although Gowanus is mainly industrial at its core, it becomes increasingly mixed as it extends toward the adjoining residential areas.

The central feature in the Gowanus area is the Gowanus Canal. It runs for a length of approximately one mile up from the Gowanus Expressway to Butler Street. The industrial area fans out along either side of the Canal from Bond Street to Fourth Avenue. A 1968 industrial survey of the area showed there to be 480 firms employing over 11,000 people in the Gowanus industrial core. A recent land-use survey of the area indicated little over-all change in land-use patterns but did note an increase in trucking and warehousing firms on land formerly occupied by more job-intensive manufacturing uses.

The current land-use pattern in Gowanus is essentially the same one that developed in the last quarter of the 19th century following the construction of the Canal. Prior to construction of the Canal, Gowanus had been a rural farming community and one of seven districts into which the City of Brooklyn was divided in 1800. The name "Gowanus" is derived from the Mohawk Indian Chief Gowane, whose tribe cultivated corn and hunted in the present-day Gowanus area at the time of the Dutch arrival in the New World.

The Gowanus Canal was first proposed in 1847 by then-Mayor of Brooklyn, D. E. Douglass. The Canal would roughly follow the path of Gowanus Creek, a tortuous tidal estuary, which wound its way up from the bay. By building a barge canal, the Mayor hoped to stimulate new industrial activity and encourage the development of adjoining property, which would be drained in the course of canal construction. The State legislature authorized the City of Brooklyn to construct the Canal in 1849. It was completed in the 1850's at a cost of \$78,000.

Throughout the 1870's and 1880's, the Canal proved to be the type of successful stimulus its developers had hoped for. An 1884 description of the Canal area portrayed it as "all lined with wharves and docks... (its) immense lumber yards, coalyards, and flouring, plaster and other mills, and brick and stone yards, occupy the whole available space..." An 1889 map shows the heaviest industrial concentration to have been around the Canal's northern basin.

By the mid-1880's large workingclass residential areas had been established within walking distance of both the east and west sides of the Canal. From the available data, it seems that many of the families were of Irish, Swedish and Norwegian extraction. Their lives and the vitality and economy of their communities were intimately linked with the industrial activity along the Canal. It was not unpleasant living near the Canal then; however, other events were taking place that would eventually give the Gowanus its malodorous place in history.

During the 1860's, Brooklyn installed its first sewer system. By 1888, it had become apparent to the City fathers that the sewers that they had built were already inadequate to handle storm water run-off from the densely developed areas north of the Canal. Therefore, they petitioned and received permission from the State legislature to discharge storm water run-off into the head of the Gowanus Canal at Butler Street. The catch was, of course, that the sewers had been built as combined units, which handled both sanitary and storm run-off water and there was no way to separate the two types of sewage. As a result, by 1900, the Canal had already become a repulsive repository of rank odors; locals dubbed it "Lavender Lake."

SECTION 2 ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA OF TRIBUTARY AREA

The 1970 population of this area was just over 18,300. Nearly three quarters of the population was white, with the remaining one quarter being nearly all Puerto Rican. Specifically, the 1970 population proportions were:

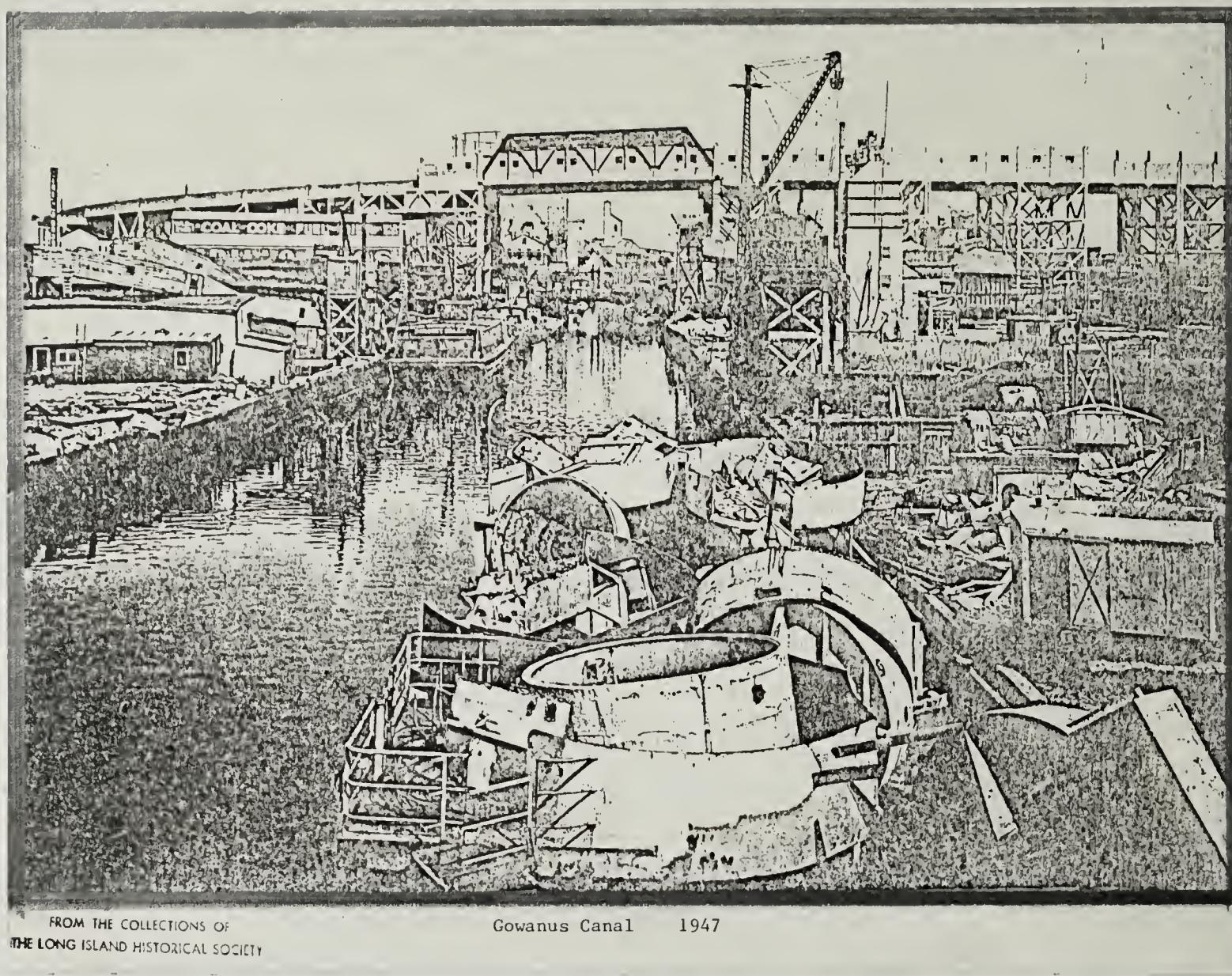
White, Non-Puerto Rican	73.48%
Puerto Rican	23.12
Black	1.84
Other	1.56
Total Population	100.00%

Approximately 26% of the white population was Italian or of Italian parentage. Over 40% of the total population was either foreign born or native born of foreign parents.

Approximately 42% of the people who live in the tributary area work in "blue-collar" occupations; this is well above the Brooklyn average of 29%. Not surprisingly, the number of people working in professional, administrative and managerial occupations is less than the Borough average, 11% compared to 24%.

The median family income for the area was \$7,966 in 1970; the median family income for Brooklyn was \$8,859. 67% of the families in the study area were earning less than \$10,000 compared to 57% for the Borough.

The Gowanus tributary area can, therefore, be characterized as a stable, home-ownership community largely composed of first and second generation immigrants of modest means.



FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF
THE LONG ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Gowanus Canal 1947

SECTION 3 ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LAND-USE POLICY AND ZONING

1. OVERVIEW

In many respects, today's land-use patterns in the Gowanus tributary area are identical to the 19th century patterns which developed following the Canal's construction. Industrial uses flank the Canal and then merge into low-density brownstone and brick residential communities. Yet although the basic pattern remains unchanged, the fundamental relationship between industry and the Canal, and industry and housing has been radically altered.

At the time that the Gowanus Canal was built, the principal method of cargo transport was water-borne barge. Therefore, construction of the Canal was a boon to industrial development and resulted in the establishment of major manufacturing operations in the area. Today, however, truck transport is the dominant means of freight movement, and this has made the Canal all but irrelevant to most industrial firms in the Gowanus area. Further, the presence of the Canal disrupts street patterns and hampers traffic circulation, a definite disadvantage to modern truck-dependent industries. Even more disturbing to industrial firms is the isolated, unpleasant environment the Canal seems to create.

At the same time the Canal has become less important to the industry, the industry has become less important to the residential communities adjoining it. The diversity of the New York economy as well as the presence of a mass transit system have meant that workers no longer have to live near their jobs as they did when the Canal was built. Only 14% of the workers in the tributary study walked to work according to the 1970 census. Thus, the residential areas that owe their origin to the Canal's development no longer owe their economic life to it. It is not surprising then, that particularly among newcomers to the area, the Canal and its surrounding industry is seen as a detriment to the area and an obstacle to an ever-expanding brownstone movement.

However, the one factor that cuts across all competing interests and unites everyone is the wretched state of the Canal. It stifles land-use change and development and it makes life unpleasant for the existing uses.

2. ZONING

The Gowanus tributary area is zoned essentially to reflect existing land-use patterns. All of the blocks immediately adjacent to the Canal are zoned for manufacturing use. The M2-1 zone predominates, but the M1-1 and M3-1 are also present along the western side of the Canal. The residential communities adjoining the industrial areas are all zoned R6.

Some scattered, and largely substandard housing, does exist in the M2-1 zone between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, south of 9th Street. Likewise, small pockets of housing are also present in the M1-2 zone on the blocks between Nevins and 4th Avenue north of 1st Street.

3. INDUSTRIAL RENEWAL AREA

In 1970, the City designated the Gowanus Industrial Renewal Area; the U.R.A. covers approximately 119 acres of land adjoining either side of the Canal. The stated aim of the plan was to create 6,000 new industrial jobs on vacant or under-utilized land.

The Gowanus URA was one area where the city never followed up its designation with actual condemnation and/or acquisition. The only new industrial activity that resulted from the URA was the transfer of a city-owned substation building to a printing firm from Coney Island. The proposed first-stage acquisition sites in the URA are now part of an area scheduled to be developed for a supermarket-commercial center, and the amount of vacant and/or under-utilized land in the URA is actually quite small. Therefore, although the plan remains on the books, it is unlikely that the city will go ahead with the URA as originally planned.

4. USE OF THE CANAL

Cargo movements on the Canal have steadily declined in recent years. In 1966, nearly 780,000 tons of freight was barged up the Canal. Ten years later, in 1976, the tonnage amounted to less than 350,000 - a 55% fall-off in freight. The type of barged cargo is now limited almost exclusively to oil, sand and gravel. The following table charts the decrease in cargo tonnage over the past decade:

Year	Tonnage
1966	779,431
1967	732,503
1968	737,069
1969	764,242
1970	417,547*
1971	671,098
1972	635,583
1973	478,976
1974	579,475
1975	429,141
1976	348,857

* Strike year

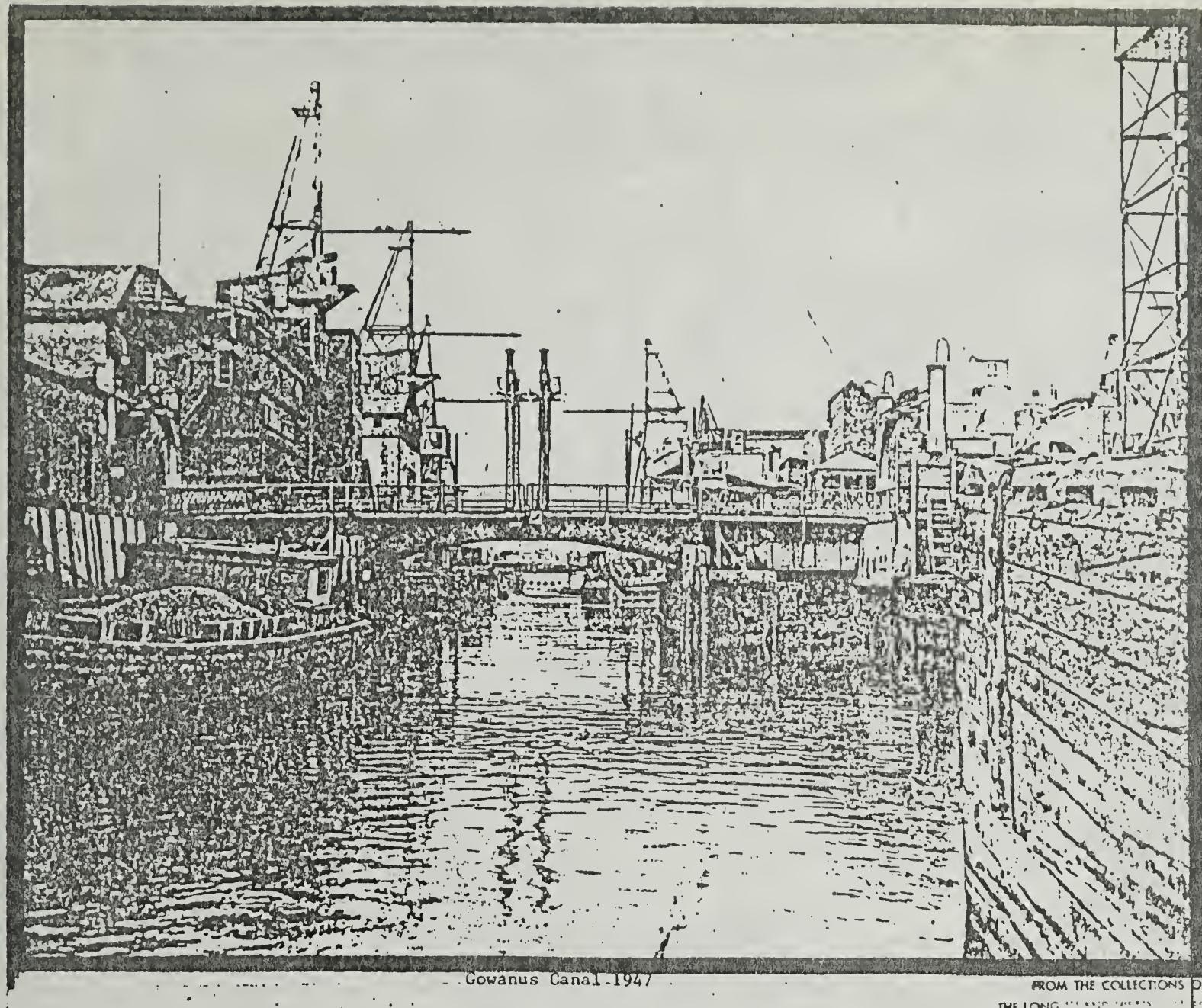
Source: Army Corps of Engineers

The number of bridge openings on the Canal also illustrates the decline in barge traffic. There are five bridges that cross the Canal. Moving north from the Bay, they are at Hamilton Avenue, 9th Street, 3rd Street, Carroll Street and Union Street. The following table compares bridge openings in the years 1968 and 1976; note that comparison figures for the Carroll Street Bridge were not available. Overall, there was a 67% fall-off in bridge openings on the Canal during this eight-year period.

BRIDGE	OPENINGS	
	1968	1976
Hamilton Ave.	3,467	1,081
9th Street	3,475	851
3rd Street	991	506
Carroll Street	*	**
Union Street	971	487
Total	8,904	2,925

* Unavailable

** Data not comparable; bridge left open part of the year



Gowanus Canal - 1947

FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF
THE LONG ISLAND MUSEUM

5. NEW DEVELOPMENTS & OPPORTUNITY SITES

This past year witnessed an intense land-use controversy over a 5-acre assemblage of land on the Canal between 12th and 14th Streets west of 2nd Avenue. In this case, a developer requested permission to convert a 4-story industrial building into a supermarket retail complex. Intense opposition to the commercial conversion was voiced by merchants from commercial strips outside the Gowanus area. Industrial firms in the vicinity of the proposed development were generally in favor of the project. They hoped that the increase in activity would bring them more security, and they also felt the development would be an amenity to their workers.

Approvals from the City Planning Commission and Board of Estimate were recently granted, and the project is expected to move forward shortly. This commercial development will signify the first major land-use change on the Canal since its construction.

The potential exists for another major land-use change on the western side of the Canal at 5th and Smith Streets. That 6-acre site, known as the "Public Place" was acquired by the city in 1973 for "public recreational purposes." The site has not yet been developed but several private proposals for recreational and residential use have recently been made. While it is not yet clear how the city will ultimately develop the site, it is certain that it will not be for industrial purposes. Similarly, a proposal has recently been made to convert a 9-story industrial building on Court and Huntington Streets, a block and a half from the Canal, into a residential development.

6. ADJOINING RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES

Carroll Gardens adjoins the industrial area on the west side of the Canal; it is a lovely residential community of moderate income, predominantly Italian-American families. It is bounded by DeGraw Street on the north, Smith Street on the east, the Gowanus Expressway on the south and the BQE on the west. To the north of the Canal is the Boerum Hill community. It is bounded by Schermerhorn Street on the north, Fourth Avenue on the east, on the south by Wyckoff Street and St. Marks Place and on the west by Court Street. It is a mixed-income, multi-racial community that is continuing to experience substantial private renovation and rehabilitation. There is a small historic district covering portions of seven blocks between Hoyt and Nevins Streets and Pacific and Wyckoff Streets.

Park Slope lies east of the Gowanus area. It is bounded by Flatbush Avenue to the north, Fourth Avenue to the west, Prospect Park to the east and the Prospect Expressway to the south. It is an attractive residential community of about 85,000 people. The housing stock is extremely attractive, and much brownstoning activity has taken place there in recent years. A large historic district covers portions of about 40 blocks in the neighborhood.

A small but attractive enclave of housing is also present between Third and Fourth Avenues and 6th to 16th Streets. This area had been zoned for manufacturing use up until 1973, when the zoning was changed to residential. It is a quiet stable area with a large proportion of older working-class homeowners. There is little evidence of brownstoning activity although the housing stock is quite attractive.

SECTION 4

ANALYSIS OF FUTURE LAND-USE TRENDS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE CANAL

The future of the Gowanus area remains inexorably linked to the future of the Gowanus Canal. When the Canal was constructed in the 19th century, waterborne shipments were essential to major industrial activity. Today's world of truck, rail and air freight has made the Canal superfluous to all but a few specialized businesses in the Gowanus area. For most of the other activities, the Canal has become an impediment or a nuisance. The poor quality of the water and its associated odors create a poor environment for industry as well as for any other uses which might wish to locate in the area.

Particularly on the west side of the Canal, where there is only a one-block wide industrial area adjoining a vital, attractive residential community, the pressures for changes in land-use and improved environmental quality of the Canal are ever-increasing. Within the past 5 years new in-fill housing was constructed on vacant land within a block of the industrial area. Proposals are now surfacing for the conversion of two industrial buildings into apartments - one building is on Huntington and Court Streets and the other on 1st Street between Hoyt and Bond. Development pressures on the previously cited "Public Place" are also increasing.

While the east side of the Canal has not been undergoing the same degree of pressure as the west side, it is about to experience its first significant land-use change with the conversion of an industrial building into a shopping mall. The east side still remains heavily industrial, but as was mentioned earlier, the industry is becoming less and less tied to the Canal. This means that industry can no longer be considered a major factor in polluting the Canal nor can it be used as a justification for failure to significantly improve the water quality in the Canal.

We expect that future land-use changes in the Gowanus area will come slowly and cautiously. The west side of the Canal is likely to continue to experience the more rapid change-over to non-industrial use because of its proximity to the burgeoning Carroll Gardens community. The east side will probably retain its basic core of jobs and businesses for many years to come. The industry in Gowanus is a valuable economic asset to the area and should be encouraged to remain and grow. There is no reason that the continued presence of industrial uses should hamper efforts to improve the water quality in the Canal.



